

# THE EXPECTABLE PROBLEMS WHICH ADOLESCENT PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT FACES: ITS TASKS AND HAZARDS

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## INTRODUCTION

In the animal kingdom the human is unique in having a period of adolescence which averages six years. While the human does not have the longest gestational period, it has by far the longest post-gestational developmental phase. The human does not even begin to assume adult body form until about 12 years of age. Brain development has almost reached its adult size by this time but it is not yet closed to further maturational influences unless its earlier, inappropriate experience has caused premature concreteness or other forms of closure. Therefore the human is more adaptable than the other mammals. When the most important force influencing human development, survival, is uppermost, even three year old children can assume adult survival tasks as demonstrated by Colin Turnbull in his study of the Ik tribe in Africa. This dramatic case is unusual, but in earlier human civilizations, and in the current less civilized parts of the world as with most mammals, early adolescence is the first stage of adult life, with initiation into the adult society and marriage. An example of these earlier expectations of the 13 year old, the ancient Hebrew ceremony for the boy at this age is for the purpose of taking his place with the man, and this is paralleled with the confirmation rituals in other religions. In the more civilized parts of the world this is an anachronism because early adolescence has in many ways become the last stage of childhood. This comparative delay in assuming adult roles particularly in what has been inaccurately called Western civilization is necessary because the majority of our youth do not have to go to work to support a family. Also there is the need to prepare for participation in an increasingly changing and more complex world, requiring increasingly complex patterns of function and much more to learn. It therefore

has its advantages, but as we shall be hearing this week, it also has its hazards.

In whatever part of the world, in every civilization, adolescence is one of the most dramatic examples of the inseparability of the biological, psychological, social and cultural influences on the human organism. The tasks initiated by the biological changes include accommodating a new set of pressures on the organism exerted by qualitative and quantitative changes in biochemical, physiological and particularly hormonal processes. The psychological tasks involved include both working out a pattern of adjustment to these new levels of biological pressure on the organism, and preparing the individual for a new set of responsibilities and tasks. The personality development which eventuates is the end result of the individual's answers to the process of finding answers to both these tasks. The struggles in the process of finding solutions to both these tasks are inevitably intertwined and the end result can best be understood by looking at each individual in terms of how he is dealing with the simultaneous pressures.

In general terms, adolescence is considered to begin at the age of 12 and to close at the age of 20, roughly coinciding with physiological puberty and the conclusion of the adolescent physical growth spurt. From a psychological standpoint adolescence begins when the person begins to grapple with adolescent psychological problems and closes when he has resolved these problems. There are some young children who are described as age 7 going on 17. In contrast psychological adolescence can and often does continue far beyond the age of 20. Our emphasis here will be on the characteristic problems of adolescence rather than on any particular age.

## A Developmental Overview

Adolescence in the part of the world most of us deal with as mental health professionals is the penultimate phase in the developmental process, the goal of which is to prepare a child to take its

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place in the adult world. In the human young, the first stage of this process involves learning how to adjust to life in the family (roughly through 5 years of age). It is followed by a period unique to the human young (6 through 12 years of age), sometimes known as the school age period or the middle age period of childhood. In this period the human young, in contrast to the other mammals, is not yet ready to take its place either physically or mentally in the community with adult responsibility. At the same time, during this period of development, the child is expected to learn how to function with horizons that are enlarged from those of the relatively small family circle to include a larger but still constricted part of the community. Adolescence prepares the individual to take his place in the larger community through balancing-off both the inner biological and physical changes with the new demands of the environment. The old answers, both those learned in the family and in the neighborhood, are brought during adolescence into the larger community and matched with the answers that are expected if the individual is to be able to take his responsible place in the community.

For convenience in discussion of their effects, the biological pressures on the organism demanding a response to maintain homeostasis may be divided into three groups. First are those pressures that relate to self preservation; second are those biological components related to sexual functioning; and third are the aggressive drives. There are considerable individual variations present from birth both quantitatively and qualitatively in the strength of these pressures. The ways in which these pressures are met and adjusted to depend upon the life experience of the child, including the standards of the environment in which it is reared, as well as the model it has in parents, teachers, siblings and the group in which the child belongs. Therefore, the child brings to adolescence an already fairly well defined set of answers about how it has determined what its responses would be to the pressures of these drives. Poor answers or part solutions can complicate the smooth adjustment to the new responsibilities for the ways in which they must be expressed in relation to the outside. In other words, the individual must achieve mastery and control of the three sets of drives as they involve his relationships, his picture of himself, his goals and his ability to utilize his capacities.

As an example, if the basic pressures for self preservation have not been met earlier, the child comes to adolescence with a primary emphasis on having needs met and remains preoccupied with dependency. This is in contrast to the child who has developed trust in his close relationships. If there has been over-stimulation or poor control and direction of the sexual drives the child may bring to this developmental stage preoccupations

with masturbation, physical contact with others or even the much earlier patterns of expression and satisfaction of the sexual drives, such as looking, touching, displaying one's self or continuing a special interest in one or more areas of the body and their functions. This is in contrast with the child who has successfully directed the energy from the sexual drives into such useful directions as creativeness and learning.

Similarly, the aggressive drives (which ideally are used in the service of action to see that the other two sets of pressures are satisfied) may have distortions based on the innate amount of aggression with which the child is born. We have the contrast of a child who from the beginning has a small amount of aggressive drive and therefore may lean towards passivity with the one who has more of such drive than is needed to deal with the satisfaction of the other drives, and therefore has a larger amount of aggression with which to experiment. The latter child, particularly if encouraged in open aggressive expression or if he has had his aggressive patterns poorly handled, may bring to adolescence distortions in the ways in which his aggression is expressed. Thus he may display hostility, rivalry, abusiveness, surliness, etc. The child with better answers will have developed more socially acceptable ways of expressing aggression, such as ambition and competition instead of rivalry, helpfulness instead of bullying, constructiveness instead of destructiveness, etc.

The child's answers to the stages of personality development through which it has gone earlier are also brought to adolescence and determine the individual's responses to adolescence. The stages gone through earlier are re-enacted as part of the work of psychological development during adolescence. The poor answers as well as the good answers are reviewed and need to be considered if one is to understand the reactions of the adolescent. Thus, in terms of relationships the ease with which comfortable ties and patterns of closeness and belonging is reflected in the way in which the adolescent responds to its review of relationships in the new perspectives. The problems he may have had earlier in working out separation and functioning as an individual are repeated in the process of attempting to find better answers. If the early ones have not been sound, separation problems can be reactivated, for example in the form of school phobia. School refusal of course can also be due to other causes such as dissatisfactions with the body as in boys with gynecomastia, immaturities and delays in development about which boys and girls are frequently teased. Many adolescents are like chickens. If chickens see a sore spot on another chicken they will pick at it. Chickens are dumb enough to stand and allow it. Adolescents more usually handle it by avoidance.

Negativism is experimented with a pattern of exercising the will as a part of oneself. Fears,

particularly as they relate to bodily hurt, are reactivated. The child who brings still unresolved fears of hurt to this new phase of development must experiment with both old and new solutions in this new phase of development if it is to resolve these fears. The problems of close individual as well as group relationships are re-enacted in terms of the experiences, sound and unsound, from the earlier phases.

The relationship problems are usually experimented with first and logically at home, often with parents and siblings. When there is unrealistic compliance with the teen-ager's wishes, demands or tricks to play people off each other, set up family triangles, or to achieve physical closeness and other forms of intimacy, there may be delays in the necessary process of giving up these ideas about those closest to them. Only when blocked are the individuals really free to reach outside the home to find more appropriate and socially acceptable directions for investment of these wishes.

The problems of cleanliness vs. messiness, the problems of property rights, right and wrong, moral values are all tested, again, to see how they fit into the new horizons and new responsibilities the child faces when it comes to adolescence. The processes by which the individual has learned to obtain satisfaction, whether from the functioning of his mind in learning, the functioning of his body in games or other forms of body expression and in his satisfactions from relationships are reviewed, re-tested, and reworked in the new context of adolescence responsibility intertwined with the answers to the new levels of the biological drives.

The individual's psychological defences are usually well established by the time he reaches adolescence. These have to do with the ways in which it controls and protects itself from excesses in responding to both the biological pressures and the environmental conditions it must meet. If there is exaggeration or distortion in the use of various forms of defence, this may complicate the re-working process of adolescence or make it more difficult or even impossible. This is particularly true if the defences operate to create rigidities in personality and everyday functioning. Some individuals are born with personality rigidities. This in turn may be added to by patterns of defence against anxiety which in turn provides additional rigidity which can complicate being able to successfully deal with the variety of standards and responsibilities that the youngster meets as he moves from setting to setting, phase to phase of development. The flexibility to maintain or adjust to more than one standard at a time is the ideal personality equipment for healthy adolescent development. Thus, a youngster needs to be free to adjust to one set of language patterns with his group, another in school, still another in the playground, and still another at home, etc. The individuals who do not

have such flexibility have a more difficult time in adjustment.

When one talks of reworking the phases of development it is no longer in terms of the more orderly development seen at earlier ages. In adolescence these phases are worked over episodically and sometimes a number of them may be in evidence simultaneously. One must also consider the cultural and social setting in which an adolescent is reared if one is to understand all the facets of its emotional development. The lower socioeconomic groups where pressures for survival can be more important than cultural values, can lead to different standards for the adolescent who is reared in this atmosphere.

### Developmental Hazards

There are expectable painful and difficult crises in almost every adolescent's personality development. Just as with the developmental crises in the first five years of life, it has been pointed out that there is usually repression of the adolescent crises, so that they are pushed out of adult conscious memory.

With these basic considerations in mind let us examine the normal and abnormal patterns which are in evidence over the range of adolescent personality development. These patterns may logically be divided in three phases in terms of the tasks to be accomplished: early, middle and late adolescence.

#### A. Early Adolescence

Early adolescence which for our purposes would include the period of puberty, ranges in onset from 11 to 13 in the girl, and 12 to 14 in the boy. In this period the major tasks faced are in terms of the physiological and physical changes of puberty. Since these are determined to the largest extent by the hormonal and, therefore, sexual changes, the major task in this age period is to adjust to the new pressures imposed on the girl or boy by the added amount of sexual awareness and interest that results from the upsurge in sexual hormone production. Adjusting to this and the physical changes in body and function, make the sexual drives one of the prime considerations during this age period. Although the aggressive and self preservative drives are re-worked as well, the major re-adjustment of these latter two pressures is carried out during middle adolescence, and will be discussed later.

In terms of expression of the sexual drives, one must keep in mind that the boys and girls have since the beginning of school age remained relatively isolated from each other in homogenous groups. The barriers that have been built up against their involvement with each other are still present during the puberty phases and, therefore, it is still quite difficult for them to express the sexual drives as individuals towards the opposite sex. It is as a group, therefore, that they are most comfortable in carrying out these

drives. One begins to see the group of girls watching the group of boys playing ball and heckling them. Likewise, the group of boys will begin to congregate where the girls are having games or club meetings. As a group they can go through the phases of sexual exploration. Thus, as the teasing of one group by another progresses, as a group they can work out ways of having physical contact in pushing, shoving, touching, as well as dressing for each other, showing off for each other, etc. Since girls mature earlier, in this phase they are more aggressive in making contact possible, such as making parties. This changes later.

This interaction as a group with the opposite sex is not enough for some youngsters to satisfy the pressures of the sexual drives. Since it is still taboo to reach across group lines, the best answer that many youngsters find for the expression and satisfaction of these drives, is to turn them toward an individual of the same sex. Thus, intense friendships begin. A girl may have a crush on another girl in the group. They become inseparable, eating, working, telephoning, playing, walking together and sleeping at each other's houses. Similarly, with boys such twosomes begin to develop within the group, although the boys are not as prone to show physical closeness, such as walking with arms around each other, as are the girls. Occasionally, however, in both groups there are youngsters who have either been overstimulated sexually earlier, have been exposed to poor controls or are highly suggestable. In these even the "buddy" arrangement or the "crush" is not sufficient to deal with the level of drive and actual sexual exploration may take place, usually in the form of mutual masturbation. When such breakthroughs are discovered there are usually greatly concerned teachers, principals, parents or physicians who ask for help for these youngsters on the basis of their being homosexual. They may be reassured that this does not mean that the youngsters involved are truly homosexual; this is a phase in which it is too dangerous yet for the pubertal child to explore in heterosexual terms. However, if poorly handled or too great fears of sexuality are brought into the picture at this point, it is not impossible for youngsters to remain pegged at this or earlier stages of development. If so they may find it necessary to obtain their major sexual satisfaction later from the "part functions" of normal adult sexual satisfactions, and concentrate on voyeurism, exhibitionism or forms of mutual masturbation, instead of progressing on to heterosexual functioning.

The maturational factors which involve the menarche and the beginnings of seminal ejaculations in the form of "wet dreams" are phenomena about which the early adolescent needs preparation. For girls in the Western world, possibly because of better nutrition menarche has been occurring at increasingly younger ages—averaging 12 years, though this may be

beginning to be revised. In recent years, in contrast to the past, it becomes rare indeed to find girls who are not prepared for the menarche. Such instruction has interestingly become part of the school curriculum and sound teaching devices have been developed in many school systems to ensure the girls' awareness of the meaning of menstruation and its hygiene. However, not as much emphasis is placed on preparation of the boys. They can be quite puzzled and even frightened by their first seminal ejaculation, particularly if they have only bits and pieces of part information about its meaning, and that from the group. Such information may be especially unreliable when obtained from peers rather than adults.

It may appear surprising on the surface that in spite of quite adequate preparation and a comprehensive intellectual awareness of the "facts of life," with the onset of menarche or ejaculation there should still be reactions in the form of behavior disorders. To understand such reactions we must look back for unresolved problems which have been carried on, often without awareness, to this stage of development. Prominent among them are identity distortions. In other words, the girl who has not wanted to be a girl and has been quite acceptable as a tomboy, must at the point of menarche and body changes try to work out a different picture of herself. In contrast, the boy who does not want completely to be a boy, identifying more as a girl, usually is less acceptable in most cultures and has received attention before this time. A number of behavioral manifestations accompany these role changing crises: withdrawal, indifference about the pleasures which had earlier been a focus, loss of interest in school and the group, excessive shyness, increased dependency, irritability, tearfulness, etc. may be manifested. Where unsolved problems about the body have been brought to this stage, especially fears of bodily hurt, not infrequently there is a reactivation of these fears and bodily concerns. Physical symptoms may then become prominent, ranging from fatigue, headaches, abdominal pains, generalized aches, and other psychophysiological manifestations. Even with relatively normal pubertal children there may be periods of such phenomena, as the youngster goes through even mild turmoil in the process of evolving a new picture of himself and better answers to even mild, persistent concerns about often unrealistic body defects and changes.

## **B. Middle Adolescence**

Usually the most troublesome period is middle adolescence covering 13 to 16 for girls and 14 to 17 for boys. Having emerged from the phase of learning to adjust to a new sized body and the resulting readjustment to new outlines, plus working out the awkwardness and clumsiness that often results, middle adolescents begin the testing of how this fits with the changing picture of their place as an individual in the larger community.



They begin to shake off the more or less well-organized system run by the responsible adults, as well as the outside "system" which is beginning to make demands on them for responsibility. Any transgressions, which once were encompassed and even hidden in the family are now his responsibility. The limits of his small world are expanded and he is under inner and outer pressure to be independent. It is at this point that one sees the major work done in matching up the old answers with the answers that are expected in the enlarged horizon. Here we see him most visibly (and her of course) alternating between the two sets of answers, the old and the new.

If one is to understand the so often contradictory behavior from the adolescent during this period one must keep in mind this seesaw process that the reworking phenomenon produces. If this phenomenon is looked at from the point of view of the drives and pressures on the organism, they sometimes can be seen more clearly. In relation to the self preservative drives (which often are used so intertwined with the other two that they may be hard to separate out), one may see the youngsters going through phases of almost infantile dependency in the demands they make on the environment and people in it, alternating this with complete independence and fighting off the need to lean on anyone. This is true not only with significant members of the family but also is seen in school adjustment and performance and even in the group to which the youngster belongs. (The group formation in this period has many similarities to the family, in which the "leader" often is the one who will allow or insist that the others be dependent on him.)

Physical concerns as reflections of self-preservative needs may be manifested by periods of considerable concern with things being wrong in physical status. Such concerns are reflected in preoccupation with skin, the hair, the complexion, the height, strength, etc. David Levy evolved the very useful technique for physicians to have an awareness of these concerns so that they can be dealt with. He would say to the youngsters (even handing them a stethoscope), "Now you are the doctor. Examine yourself. What do you find wrong and what would you like to correct or change?" When such concerns about physical status are intertwined with fears of bodily hurt, the symptoms resulting may be reflected in anxiety based neurotic symptoms. Characteristically these concerns alternate with indifference about appearance, lack of concern about physical needs.

In relation to the pressures for sexual satisfaction, most youngsters are not yet ready in this age period for direct heterosexual expression of these drives. This does not mean that some middle teen-agers cannot have such an extreme level of heterosexual interest, reinforced by previous sexual experience or seduction that the usual barriers and fears related to bodily hurt and the

uncertainties about body integrity as well as the social taboos are not sufficient to prevent overt acted out expression and satisfaction of the sexual pressures.

In most boys and not infrequently in girls, relief from sexual pressures is sought in masturbation in the face of sexual taboos and fears. The patterns in this area reflect the "off and on" character of this period. Masturbation may be carried out daily or multiple times a day, to be followed by shorter or longer periods of abstinence. Likewise, exhibitionistic tendencies in dress and in activity may alternate with excessive modesty. In mid-adolescence the need to fend off the opposite sex or even to defend against the fantasies of a sexual nature which may be in conflict with their concepts of right and wrong or may stir up too many fears, may result in extremes of avoidance. This warding off may take the form of repulsive obesity in some. Still others may adopt a complete opposite pattern of avoiding any suggestion of sexual interest by making sure that none of the body contours are even remotely suggestive of pregnancy. Sometimes this is accomplished by stopping eating, a not uncommon basis for anorexia nervosa in this age group. From this point of view I have never seen a case of anorexia nervosa in which the youngsters did not have eating as one of their earlier greatest pleasures and preoccupations.

As a sidelight to the struggles to keep sexual thoughts and wishes in place, it has become apparent from a number of difficult situations which have resulted that there are dangers in teen-age boys being used as baby-sitters outside their own immediate families. For example, a 15-year-old boy was given babysitting responsibilities with a four-year-old girl which involved toileting, bathing and dressing the child. This adolescent boy who had otherwise well established barriers to sexual acting out was presented with a situation in which the seductive aspect broke down his usual controls. This led to sex play with his young charge. This in turn led to high levels of unmanageable neighbourhood and community feelings of outrage and need for punishment. This not unusual situation indicates that it would be useful to keep adolescent boys from such situations in which their control barriers may not always stand the strain put on them.

The more usual and healthy directions in which the energies from the sexual drives may more safely be invested are in physical and creative activities. Thus, athletics, dancing and imposing sometimes prodigious physical tasks on themselves serves the mid-adolescent important outlets for utilizing this energy in safe directions. Quite useful are the creative directions in which this age group often turn as substitute outlets for the blocked or forbidden direct sexual expression. In some there is a considerable investment of time and energy in intellectual and scientific pursuits,

particularly those involving curiosity. Some become pre-occupied with literature and poetry and may try their hand at writing. More common forms of writing are the diaries which are started in this age period. Not infrequently they are kept locked but with the key left available so that others may see what goes on. The drive for popularity may also be a direction in which these still taboo direct sexual expressions may be sublimated. The more boy-friends or girl-friends ("scalps") the youngsters with this preoccupation collect, the safer they are from being too involved with any one individual. On the other hand, going steady is another form of protection, particularly if the young twosome can be sure that one or the other will set limits on the amount of "making out".

Considerable publicity has been given to the changes in moral values and various media about sexuality and their influence on adolescents. When looked more closely at, this influence has been chiefly to allow more open talk and expression of sexual themes. In terms of actual sexual activity, studies show that there have always been 15 to 20% of middle class youngsters who indulged directly, 20% who wanted to but didn't dare and the rest who restrained themselves on the basis of inculcated value systems, guilt, fears or effective sublimation. The chief change has been in the 20% who didn't dare, but now have a form of permission. Studies of teen-age pregnancies show three types of involvement: 1. The immature girl unable to withstand pressure usually from an older male. 2. The more mature girl carried away with the situation, disregarding (or inadequate) information. 3. The girl with pathological sexuality, using it to achieve satisfaction of relationships and/or other emotional needs.

Characteristically, many youngsters will alternate direct involvement in one degree or another of sexual activity with periods of abstinence, withdrawal, etc., at which time the intellectual directions may predominate. These directions may in turn alternate with truantries, indifference, pornographic literature, denying themselves what they love best, etc. Similarly, one may see preoccupation with abstinence from many things greatly desired, alternating with splurges in which they may eat three or four banana splits a day, spend all their allowance in an hour, etc., in contrast to previous frugality.

Where the aggressive drives are concerned a similar type of alternation between the old and the new answers may be seen. For example, if negativism had been used in early stages of development as a means of expressing aggressive feelings, the negativism which is experimented with again during this age period may take on the characteristics of considerable argumentativeness or even rebellion. The characteristics of the well known and dreaded adolescent rebellion when closely examined would appear to be a reactivation

in some youngsters of the components of earlier negativism. We see early and mid-adolescents saying "no" just for the sake of saying "no", even when they might mean "yes". They are now able to be much more effectively oppositional since they are bigger and smarter and can use these devices much more efficiently as a means of fighting as well as using them as a means of declaring independence. In the presence of such individual or group challenges or outrageous demands, the need for confrontation is well documented.

One may see in mid-adolescence patterns of pleasure in sadistic or destructive acts. These seem sometimes senseless if one does not keep in mind the reworking of old patterns of aggressive hurting and destroying from early years to find how they fit into the new setting and wider horizons. Such periods (which may be brief or episodic) may alternate with periods of gentleness and extreme kindness. Interpersonal hurtfulness and selfishness may change in the next hour, the next day or the next week with gentleness and giving friends or family the shirt off one's back or anything one owns. Inconsiderate rudeness will shift to periods of great interpersonal sensitivity and empathy.

The more usual and useful directions in which the energy from the aggressive drives are channelled are competition and ambition. This may take the various forms of athletic or intellectual competing. It may take the form of team effort or it may take the form of rooting for the team, exhorting the team to fight. It may take the form of imposing large work loads on oneself which must be watched so that they do not lead to discouragement about reaching goals of accomplishment.

When the issue of cleanliness vs. messiness has taken on the elements of a battle in a youngster's life experience, it may again be reflected in contradictory mid-adolescent behavior. Thus, many youngsters wear dirty clothes and present an appearance of sloppiness (saddle shoes or sneakers are useless until they are dirty), alternating with periods of preoccupation with the new clothes and the current teen-age fashionable outward appearance. Similarly, personal rooms which might have been through periods of being clean and neat, suddenly may become messy and disordered. Where being messy had earlier been a way of making people upset, it will be tried out again to see if it still works. In some extreme cases, usually as a group phenomenon, the pleasure in messiness, combined with displaced sexual excitement takes the form of senseless vandalism by otherwise well functioning youngsters.

It is not only the pressures from the biological sources which are being reworked and reordered in the life and makeup of the mid-teenager. He is bringing to this reworking process the character patterns and value systems which were developed earlier. As an example, in terms of

property rights, "collecting" in the community is not uncommon. An illustration of this is the somewhat shamefaced minister who came for suggestions about what to do with the garage full of street signs his 15-year-old had collected. Where there might have been preoccupation with seeing that parents obeyed traffic rules earlier, once the youngsters start driving themselves there is liable to be at least a period of experimenting with breaking the traffic rules of the community, particularly if their earlier models were less than model observers of these rules.

Delinquency in this age period is an extremely complex phenomenon which may have its roots in the self-preservative drives, the sexual pressures, the aggressive manifestations or the character patterns, as well as in the cultural and social systems of value to which the youngster is exposed. Thus, it is difficult to generalize about delinquency as a mid-adolescent problem. One must look at each individual if one is to understand the basis for his or her anti-social behavior. If, on whatever basis, the child has not been taught to say "no" to himself, he cannot say "no" to himself as an adolescent. Then the community must say "no" to him. If the adolescent cannot hear when the community says "no", one must look at what has happened which makes it difficult or impossible for the individual to hear and to adopt the standards of the community for himself. Some delinquency is rooted in the group, some in cultural values. The individuals with poor impulse control, anti-social attitudes, more primitive ego, and poorer sublimations and coping skills and an ability to plan for the future are felt to be more prone to delinquency.

In spite of the wide range of tasks to be accomplished in this age period and the variety of inner and outer pressures to which to adjust successfully, the largest percentage of the mid-adolescents negotiate this phase and with relatively little difficulty. By and large these are the youngsters who brought fairly healthy answers to the management of the drives, sound character patterns and identifications with good models which have been available to them. Above all they have the constitutional flexibility and defensive flexibility which allows them to negotiate the expected fluctuation in behavior and demands without becoming anxious or without becoming left at one extreme of behavior or the other as a way of life. This does not mean that they cannot have transient situational adjustment difficulties, such as periods of school difficulty, periods of hostility, sleeplessness, depression or other obvious indicators of short emotional turmoil. In addition to this group there is the large group which "matures" during the mid-adolescent period, in the sense of finding better answers to replace those poor ones which they brought from earlier periods of development. The not uncharacteristic picture with such

youngsters is a hectic early and mid-adolescent period, ending with a more balanced adjustment.

One phenomenon of mid-adolescence is an interest in work, especially for pay. This attempt to test themselves in the world of work is too often disregarded, whereupon it can disappear.

In those individuals where there is lack of flexibility, either on the basis of constitutional makeup of defensive patterns, such as obsessional and compulsive ways of life and, particularly, if they have poor answers from earlier phases of development in combination with rigidity, one may see extreme emotional disturbances, school dropouts and turning to the alcohol or drug scene. In other words, where the distance between the answers that are expected and the answers to which the youngster is bound from earlier days is too great, and the distance cannot be negotiated, there may easily be feelings of hopelessness and despair, leading to depression, alienation, aimlessness, anomie, and withdrawal which can end in often serious suicidal thoughts (although most adolescents have short bouts with suicidal preoccupation).

They may develop states of confusion which are very similar at first glance to psychotic states, but fortunately are transitory. One must be on the alert, of course, for the actual onset of psychotic manifestations, because this is the period of life in which the largest number of first episodes of mental breakdown occur. These are usually schizophrenic in nature, although the first manifestations of manic depressive psychosis may occur later in adolescence. Usually the first symptoms of these borderline and other more severe emotional disturbances are related to basic unsolved separation anxiety. The school phobias occurring in the earlier or mid-adolescent period must be carefully scrutinized as possible early indicators of beginning psychosis.

### C. Late Adolescence

Late adolescence may be thought of as ranging from 17 to 21 years of age, coinciding with the conclusion of the adolescent physical growth process. Ideally, the adolescent psychological problems are resolved during this period, but psychological adolescence can continue far beyond the age of 21. It should be pointed out here that there are special problems in those youngsters who have developmental distortions, i.e., in whom puberty comes earlier than the norm, and in whom puberty comes later, sometimes not until one would expect late adolescence to be occurring. In either case the delays in development or premature development pose special problems in that they make these youngsters different from their peers. There are more problems seen in the late maturer than in the early maturer, because even though younger, a youngster's physical and mental maturity at an early age will still allow him to be incorporated in an older group. With the delays in physical and emotional maturity special

problems arise because the differences can make the youngster stand out or be butt of teasing, uncomfortable comparisons in the gym, etc. Such youngsters need the reassurance from the physician that with everything else being normal, they can expect to achieve maturity and the delay does not mean that they have fundamental pathology.

The tasks of late adolescence are to crystallize a stable identity, to work out an adequate career choice, to have independence from family as necessary, to achieve a mature sexual identity, and to evolve ethical and moral values which have reasonable consonance with society. This is a prime point at which distortions may be corrected before they are crystallized as a way of life and functioning. This need is being recognized increasingly with availability in schools and colleges of trained counsellors and guidance services. Very often the working out of the problems brought to this latest phase of adolescence are not achieved until the individual leaves home, possibly for college, armed services, jobs or even for short periods, such as summer jobs or visiting or travel.

Since Erikson highlighted the identity crises of adolescence, there has been considerable exploration of the role of cultural values and family influences in this process. Even though identity formation begins in infancy, it is crystallized in late adolescence. The adolescent growing up where cultural norms for adolescent behavior are clear has an easier time in this process. Thus cultural values are clearer in more primitive societies. For example, Tagani El Mahi, the brilliant psychiatrist in the Sudan, described how in some of his country's villages, stealing the next village's cattle by adolescents was approved, but stealing within one's own village was condemned.

In more advanced societies, many adolescents go through a stage in which they question first their family's value systems and then society's. This is not new, although on the current scene it is exaggerated. Samuel Johnson said that there was something wrong with a person who is not a radical by the time he is twenty (and still is at forty). Where families are in transition and are separated from their roots, where families have given up or moved away from the standards of their own elders, it is not uncommon for their adolescents to likewise move away and form adolescent subcultures looking for better answers than their parents provide. These subcultures vary by class. In the slums and ghettos they can be more survival or anti-social oriented, or pleasure seeking. In the middle class and upper middle class they can be based on searching for idealized value systems in a changing world where hazards to humanity loom large or they can look for escapist orientations (the drug culture) or a return to the fundamentals their parents have given up such as in religion. It

can take the form of returning to the parent's original tribe, ethnic group and even language. This is in contrast to the adolescent who is in a first generation family in a new setting and who is looking both for acculturation and assimilation by the dominant group. It can take the form of activism or militancy in contrast to their parents' passivity and acceptance of such conditions as minority group oppression and colonialism.

In any or all of these movements by adolescents to find themselves one sees the interaction of inner conflict, self image, social organization, family structure, ideological movements and the impact, positive or negative, of the educational systems to which they are exposed. Those youngsters who have the aggressive energy to attempt to find solutions to their identity crises are at least trying to find their way. If they are going in directions in which they can get hurt we need to help them. But we should be concerned even more about those who haven't the resources to mobilize themselves and are in process of becoming the helpless, hopeless, passive, depressed and withdrawn members of our societies who will fill our mental hospitals and welfare roles. Many of them can still be reached during adolescence.

A final hazard out of others we could comment on is the impact on adolescent personality development of handicaps. These may be minor and/or concern only the individual such as acne, overweight, undersize, lack of strength, or the "wrong" kind of hair, skin, figure, etc. There are also more major handicapping processes including chronic illness, uncorrected learning disabilities, physically limiting processes such as some of the psychophysiological difficulties. All of these have an influence on the self-image and identity development. Earlier these more handicapped individuals were at a disadvantage because so much of peer participation was based on physical activity. In adolescence, more opportunities are available for intellectual and other non-physical activities in groups which can build up self-esteem and a picture of usefulness. Beginning at 8 it takes only two youngsters to form a club. Their first activity is to make a set of rules, the first one of which is how to keep a third youngster out.

Finally, many of our adolescents are moving in a direction of making this one world. With instant communication systems, teen-agers over the world know what each other are doing, wearing, singing and even thinking. The adolescent in the African bush with a transistor radio to his ear can never be completely the same as his father and grandfather. They are providing a beginning for what will take more generations to accomplish. They can never be completely like past generations any more. Let us aim then to help them to develop with freedom to make choices, with flexibility to meet changing conditions and healthy respect for themselves and mankind.